

# UNDERSTANDING THE LOGIC MODEL: A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

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## What is Evaluation?

Evaluation planning often helps to support program planning and development, especially when using the logic model approach. Evaluation should help to inform and improve programs as they develop, and not focus only on whether the programs "worked" or "didn't work". Evaluation can be defined as a systematic effort to collect and use program information for multiple purposes.

There are many different ways to conduct evaluations, and professional evaluators tend to agree that there is no "one best way" to do any evaluation. Instead, good evaluation requires carefully thinking through the questions that need to be answered, the type of program being evaluated, and the ways in which the information generated will be used. Good evaluation should provide useful information about program functioning that could contribute to program improvement.

## Using A Logic Model for Evaluation Planning

Before you plan your evaluation, it is recommended that you develop a program "logic model." A "logic model" is a written process that directly ties program activities with short- and long-term health outcomes. The logic model lays out what the program is expected to achieve and how it is expected to work, based on an expected chain of events that link:

- the critical factors that your program is addressing  
**(Goals)** to
- the initiatives and interventions (work components) that will be implemented  
**(Activities and Outputs)** to
- the immediate changes that are expected in individuals, organizations, or communities  
**(Short-Term Outcomes)** to
- mid-level outcomes (awareness and knowledge leading to behavioral change)  
**(Intermediate Outcomes)** to
- the final consequences  
**(Long-Term Health Outcomes).**

This chain of events that links inputs to outputs to outcomes in response to a situation is your "logic model." It articulates what you hope to achieve and how. It is based on a series of ordered actions that are logically linked. All begin with a clear specification of the situation—the problem or issue—being addressed in order to indicate the most appropriate chain of events. Too often we begin with a program, intervention, activity, or service that seems like a good idea and then try to make it fit the situation or problem.

Understanding your community's issues in order to design an appropriate program will involve a needs assessment, prioritization process, and resources assessment.

### **Who Should Develop the Logic Model?**

It is recommended that you engage as many key stakeholders as possible in developing the program's logic model. This builds a sense of commitment and shared direction. Often, differences in perceptions and ideas about expected outcomes, procedures and philosophies emerge during these discussions. Developing the logic model together may unearth or accentuate divergent opinions on how to reach the end.

Working on a logic model can also help build ownership of both the program and evaluation. It helps key stakeholders recognize the limits of what the program can do and how other community factors may influence the achievement of long-term goals

### **Benefits of a Logic Model**

Groups often do not want to spend time at the outset of their collaboration to develop a logic model. For some, creating a map of the program may seem overly rational or unrealistic. But taking time to develop a logic model not only makes explicit the intended outcomes and assumptions of the project, but makes evaluation more feasible and effective. It enables you to focus on appropriate evaluation questions that have meaning and value to key stakeholders.

Building a logic model provides the following benefits:

- A logic model develops understanding. It helps build understanding, if not consensus, about what the program is, what it expects to do, and what measures of success it will use.
- A logic model helps to monitor progress. It provides a plan to track changes so that successes can be replicated and mistakes avoided.
- A logic model serves as evaluation framework. It makes it possible to identify appropriate evaluation questions and relevant data that are needed.
- A logic model helps to reveal assumptions. It helps program planners to be more deliberate about what they are doing and identifies assumptions that may need validating.
- A logic model helps to restrain over-promising. It helps program planners and others realize the limits and potential of any one program.
- A logic model promotes communications and enhances potential fund development. It creates a simple communication piece useful in portraying and marketing your program.

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NOTE: The information presented above is adapted from  
<http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/bestpractices/eval.htm><sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CSAP's Western Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) is one of six regional centers funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The purpose of CSAP's Western CAPT is to

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assist states, jurisdictions, and community-based prevention programs in the Western Region to apply scientifically defensible strategies in their efforts to prevent substance abuse.